

Borough Improvement League House  
Formerly Franklin School  
491 Middlesex Avenue  
Metuchen, Middlesex County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-226

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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Borough Improvement League House  
Formerly Franklin School  
491 Middlesex Avenue  
Metuchen, Middlesex County, New Jersey

Owner: The Trustees of the Borough Improvement  
League

Date of Erection: 1805

Architect:

Builder:

Present Condition: Good; restored

Number of Stories: One and one-half with cupola

Materials of Construction: Foundation - fieldstone  
with concrete footing

Exterior walls - frame  
construction, beveled  
wood siding, brick filled  
between studs

Interior walls - plaster,  
exposed framing in side and  
end walls

Inside and outside brick  
chimneys

Roof - pitch, slate over  
old wood shingles, tower  
wood construction

### Historical Data:

In 1805 the only school house in the Borough of Metuchen was about two miles out of town on the old road to New Brunswick. Some of the citizens of the town decided that a school building in the heart of the town was needed. Mr. John Harned donated a piece of land on condition that the property and the building erected thereon should be kept for a school. Each citizen interested decided to donate some portion of the building material.

The frame of the building was cut out of timbers from nearby woods. The beams are the logs which were hand-hewn on the premises. The rough workmanship was done by the citizens who donated the material. The carpenter hired to raise the building refused pay when he learned that the building was to be used as a school.

The school was opened in June, 1807 and functioned as a school until 1872 when a new two story building was erected. The older building fell into decay.

At the beginning of the twentieth century a Civic League was formed in Metuchen and the old school house was decided upon as a meeting place. In 1906 negotiations were opened for the purchase of the property. After the purchase it was reconditioned. Originally the building consisted of two rooms; the partitions were removed, and the roof was shored and rebraced. At one end of the room thus formed was an inglenook with bookcases and a fireplace; at the other end a raised platform opening into a small kitchen and

dressng room. In 1922 the building was redeccorated; the kitchen modernized and footlights and curtains added, giving the room a theatrical touch.

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Information obtained from Mrs. C. C.  
Mook, President of the League by  
Arthur Church

Arthur Church  
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams  
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Rev. Jan. 25.31 -TLC